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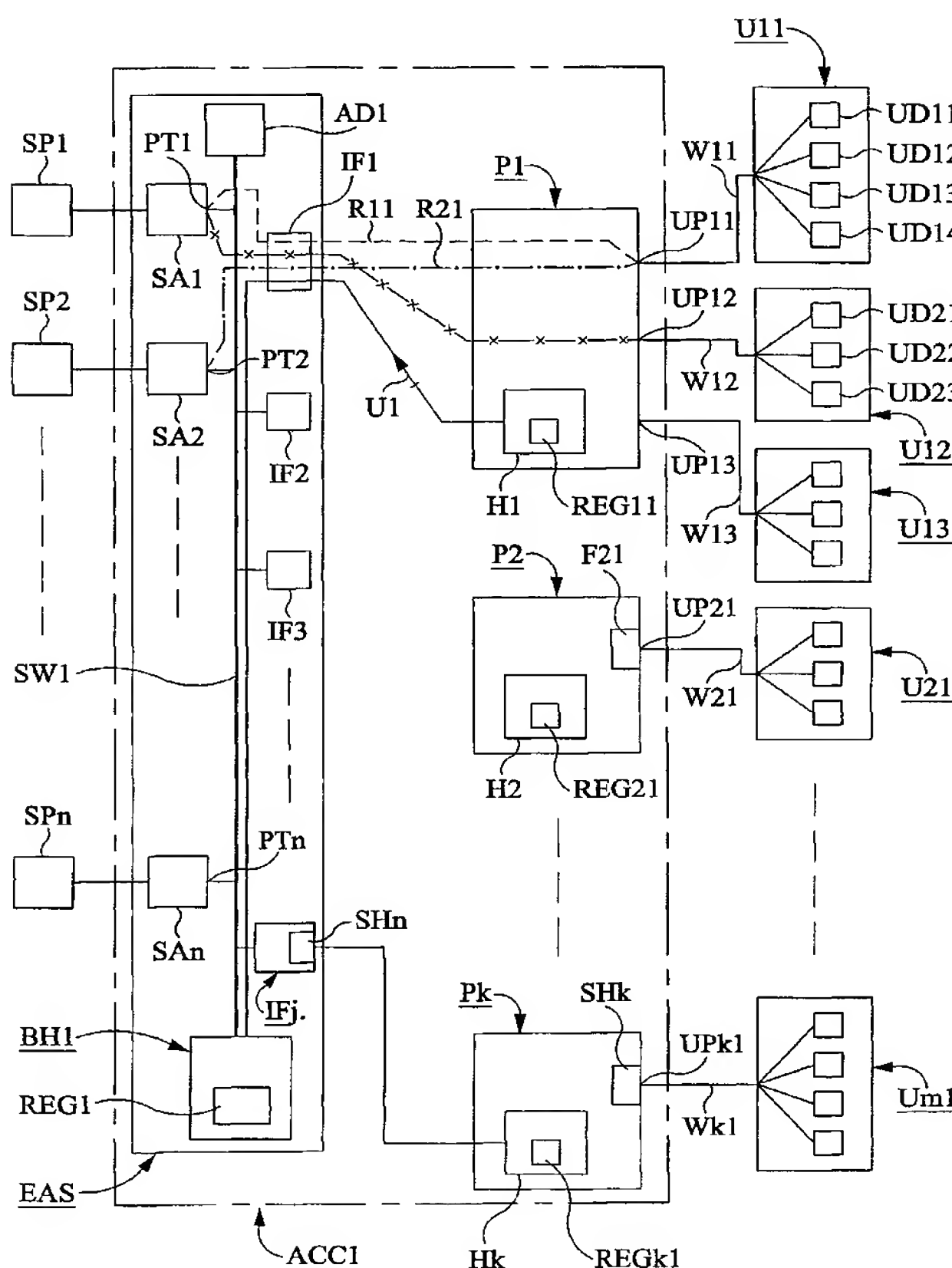
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(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM RELATING SERVICE PROVIDERS TO CLIENTS, IN AN ACCESS NETWORK, USING DYNAMICALLY ALLOCATED MAC ADDRESSES



(57) Abstract: An access system (ACC1) for relating service providers (SP1-SPn) to users (U11-Um1) includes an edge access server (EAS) connecting the service providers and penults (P1-Pk) connecting the users. User devices (UD11-UD14) are connected via VLAN:s to a user port (UP11) on the penult. The edge access server has service agents (SA1-SAn), an administrator (AD1) and a broadcast handler (BH1), which forms a handling system together with handlers (H1-Hk) in the penults. A user (U11) decision including VLAN, service (SP1) and user port (UP11) is sent to the administrator (AD1), which dynamically allocates to the relevant service agent (SA1) a MAC address, defining a relation (R11). A user device (UD11) broadcasts a DHCP request unicast together with user port (UP11) to the broadcast handler (BH1). The user device (UD11) gets its IP address and IP address to the service agent (SA1). The device (UD11) broadcasts an ARP request which is unicast by the penult (P1), to get the MAC address to the service agent (SA1). The relations (R11, R21) are secure and can easily be controlled.



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METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR RELATING SERVICE PROVIDERS TO CLIENTS,
IN AN ACCESS NETWORK, USING DYNAMICALLY ALLOCATED MAC ADDRESSES

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a multiservice Ethernet access system and methods of establishing service access
5 relations in the system.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

Ethernet has been developed mainly as a LAN (Local Area Network) technology, aiming to provide an efficient infrastructure for data networks within a company.
10 Originally it was developed for moderate speed shared media, but current technology applies mainly to point-to-point links up to 10 Gbit/s, interconnected by high capacity Ethernet switches, supporting virtual LAN, VLAN, as described in the standard IEEE .802.1q. A virtual LAN is a
15 group of system, such as computers in a workgroup, that need to communicate with each other, and protocols that restrict the delivery of VLAN frames to members of the VLAN.

A LAN can be partitioned into multiple VLAN:s, where each VLAN is assigned a number called a VLAN identifier that
20 identifies it uniquely within the LAN. A LAN contains at least one VLAN, the default VLAN.

Switches contain advanced self learning features and broadcast behaviour, which are well suited for the building of for example a corporate network, supporting a number of
25 user groups.

However, in public service structures different requirements are put with respect to security, scaling and chargeability of services. In the public network, each user would ideally have his own completely isolated set of work groups
30 available. A particular problem is then that the number of available VLAN tags, each tag defining a user, is limited to

a number 4096, which is far from enough to serve hundreds of thousands of users.

In the international patent application No. WO 00/77983 is described a telecommunications system in which users can select services. Service networks and users are connected to a switched domain. The service networks are arranged into groups and each group is allocated a VLAN by configuring the ports in the switches. The users can select services by configuring their apparatuses to a selected one of the VLAN:s.

In the international patent application No. WO 00/79830 is described a telecommunication system in which users can select services. A switched domain has switches to which service providers and network terminals are connected. The switches have a user port connected to an uplink port in the network terminal. The user port is configured for the different service providers and the network terminals have corresponding service ports. The service ports corresponding to predetermined ones of the services are configured.

In these two applications the number of users is restricted.

In the European patent application EP 1045553 A2 is disclosed VLAN bridging of a network. The network has nodes for changing of addresses. A user sending a message via the network addresses it to a receiver. When the message reaches one of the network nodes the receiver address is changed into a temporary address for the network. This address is changed back when the message leaves the network via another of the network nodes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is concerned with a problem how to create a multiservice access system with ethernet technology for a practically unrestricted number of users.

Another problem is how to offer the users services via the system, a number of the services practically covering all offered services.

A further problem is how to offer secure service bindings
5 between the users and the service providers.

Still a problem is how to establish the service bindings as unicast bindings.

Still another problem is how to establish the service bindings as multicast bindings.

10 Yet another problem is how to control the traffic in the system.

The problem is solved by an access system including a node, called an edge access server, for connecting the service providers and a node, called a penult, for connecting the
15 users, the nodes being interconnected by an arrangement supporting exchanging of Ethernet frames. The edge access server has service agents for the connecting of the service providers and the penults have user ports for connection to user networks. In a unicast case secure individual service
20 access relations are provided in the access system, each relation being provided between one of the service agents and one of the user ports. In a multicast case the service access relations are provided between one of the service agents and a plurality of the user ports. The relation is
25 extended for connecting of the user networks.

Somewhat more in detail the user ports are designed for connecting of the user networks, which have each one Ethernet LAN with at least one VLAN. Each service access relation has a dynamically assigned MAC address assigned to
30 the relevant one of the service agents. The service access relation is in one alternative defined by the dynamically assigned MAC address and in an alternative defined by the

MAC address in combination with a further identifier. The service access relation is bound to one of the user ports and, in the multicast case, bound to a plurality of the user ports. The access system has a broadcast handler system and
5 broadcast messages involved in service access or service use are picked up by this system in the penult hosting the user port. Shaping of the traffic is performed with the aid of the dynamically assigned MAC address and, where appropriate, in combination with the further identifier.

10 A purpose with the invention is to give a practically unrestricted number of users access to services via an access system with Ethernet technology.

Another purpose is that the number of services that can be offered simultaneously to a user practically covers all
15 offered services.

A further purpose is that service access relations between service providers and user devices shall be secure relations.

Still a purpose is that Ethernet technology shall be
20 utilized for establishing service access relations in the network.

Still another purpose is to establish the service access relations as either unicast or multicast relations.

Yet a purpose is to control the traffic in the system.

25 An advantage with the invention is that a multiservice access network for a practically unrestricted number of users can be created, using already standardized Ethernet technology.

Another advantage is that that the number of services that
30 simultaneously can be offered to a user practically covers all offered services.

A further advantage is that service access relations between service providers and users are secure relations.

Still an advantage is that Ethernet technology is utilized for establishing service bindings in the network.

- 5 Still another advantage is that the service access relations can be established as unicast relations or as multicast relations.

Yet other advantages are that no coordination of VLAN use between users is required in the unicast case, standard
10 Ethernet components can be utilized both in the access system and in the user networks and the invention makes possible a simple administration and configuration of the access network.

The invention will now be described more in detail with the
15 aid of embodiments and with reference to the enclosed figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows a block schematic with an overview of an access system;

- 20 Figure 2 shows a block schematic with more details for the access system of figure 1;

Figure 3a shows a diagram over an ethernet frame;

Figure 3b shows a diagram over a VLAN tag in the frame;

- Figure 3c shows a diagram over an address field in the
25 frame;

Figure 4 shows a block schematic over a user in figure 1 with the user's VLAN:s;

Figure 5 shows a block diagram over a register in a broadcast handler;

Figure 6 shows a block schematic over an uplink Ethernet frame;

5 Figures 7 shows a block with addresses;

Figure 8 shows a block diagram over a register in a handler;

Figure 9 shows a flow chart over a method for defining an access relation;

10 Figure 10 shows a flow chart over a DHCP request method;

Figure 11 shows a flow chart over an ARP request method;

Figure 12 shows a block schematic over the access system in a multicast situation; and

Figure 13 shows a flow chart over a multicast method.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Figure 1 shows a multiservice access system ACC1 to which users U11, U12, U13, U21, ... , Um1 and service providers SP1, SP2, ..., SPn are connected. An objective is to build the system such that the number of the users U11 ... Um1 can be very great, e.g. in the range of several hundred thousands users. Another objective is that the number of the service providers SP1 ... SPn, that each user can utilize, also is a great number, e.g. in the range of thousands of services. The access system ACC1 includes nodes P1, P2 ... Pk, to which the users are connected with the aid of Ethernet technology. The access system also includes a node EAS, to which the service providers are connected. The node EAS is connected to the user's nodes P1-Pk via a network, which is an Ethernet based network ETH1 according to the standard IEEE 802.1q. This network is a large network and has among others

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a number of VLAN capable Ethernet switches, not shown in the figure. The users and the service providers are connected to each other by individual service access relations through the network ETH1, e.g. a relation R11 for the user U11 and
5 the service provider SP1. These relations have a guaranteed quality of service and are secure in the meaning that only the user and the service provider having the relation can listen to or else utilize this relation. The relations will be described more in detail below.

10 The embodiment in figure 1 is more closely shown in figure 2. The nodes P1, P2, ... Pk of the access system ACC1, hereinafter called penults, have user ports UP11, UP12, UP13, UP21, ... , UPk1. Each of the user ports are connected to each a single one of the users U11 - Um1 by wires W11 -
15 Wk1. The penults P1 - Pk have each a handler H1, H2, ... , Hk, which administers the user ports on the respective penult. The handlers have each a register REG11, REG21,... REGk1. The node EAS of the access system ACC1 is an edge access server, which in turn includes service agents SA1, SA2, ..., SAn with
20 each a respective service port PT1, PT2, ..., PTn. The edge access server also has interfaces IF1, IF2, IF3,...IFj, an administating unit AD1 and a broadcast handler BH1 with a register REG1. The units of the edge access server are all bound to an Ethernet frame distribution system SW1. Each of
25 the service agents are attributed to each a single one of the service providers SP1 - SPn. The penults are connected to the edge access server EAS via the interfaces. The handlers H1-Hk in the penults are bound to the broadcast handler BH1 in the edge access server EAS, together forming
30 a distributed handling system. The users U11 - Um1 have each a number of user devices and e.g. the user U11 has devices UD11, UD12, UD13 and UD14, and the user U12 has devices UD21, UD22 and UD23 .

As mentioned, the network ETH1 and the users U11- Uml utilize Ethernet technology. The Ethernet technology therefore will be shortly commented below.

In figure 3a is shown an Ethernet frame FR1 according to the standard IEEE802.1q. The frame has a field D1 for a destination address and a following field S1 for a source address. It also has a field T1 for defining a type of Ethernet frame. A field VL1 points out which VLAN that is concerned and a field EPL1 contains the payload, the message that is to be transmitted. An address F is reserved as a broadcast address.

In figure 3b the field VL1 is shown in some more detail. It has 16 bits which includes 3 bits for a priority tag PTG1, one indicator bit and 12 bits in a field VTG1 for a VLAN tag. It is this VLAN tag that points out the specific VLAN and as this tag has 12 bits it can distinguish $2^{12} = 4096$ different VLANs.

Figure 3c shows the source address field S1, which consists of 48 bits. One bit L1 points out whether the address is locally or globally administrated. One bit M1 points out whether the frame FR1 is a multicast frame used for e.g. IP multicast messages. The remaining 46 bits in a field ADR1 are address bits for MAC addresses. Any of the user devices has one globally administrated MAC address, which is given by the manufacturer of the device. The user device UD11 in figure 2 for example has an address UMAC1. The MAC address is unique for the device. From the description below it will also appear that the number of different service providers, e.g. among the service providers SP1- SPn, that can be connected to one and the same of the users, is restricted by the number of the VLAN tags, i.e. the number $2^{12} = 4096$.

In figure 4 is shown details how the user devices are related to the penult. The figure is a logic view over the relations. In the example the user U11 has an Ethernet LAN ETH2 containing user VLAN:s with tags TAG1, TAG2, TAG3 and TAG4, which LAN is connected to the user port PT11 via the wire W11. The user device UD11 is in turn attributed to the VLAN with tag TAG1, the device UD12 has the tag TAG2, the device UD13 has both the tags TAG2 and TAG3 and the device UD14 has the tag TAG4.

10 In a common Ethernet, on one hand, the different participants within each VLAN can communicate with each other freely and efficiently, which is a basic principle of the Ethernet. A first user that wants to contact a second user sends broadcast an address resolution protocol ARP
15 with a request "Who has this IP address?". Everybody in the network can listen and the second user, that has the IP address in question, sends back his MAC address to the first user. A relation between the users is established. In an access system, on the other hand, a fundamental service
20 is to both enable establishment of service bindings between users and service providers and, in such bindings, provide a transport service through the access system such that the service can be delivered to the user with high security and without any quality degradation. In a multi-service, multi
25 service provider scenario several such bindings must be possible for each user at any given point in time, without interference between the bindings or between bindings for different users. In the present description will be disclosed how a multiservice access system, e.g. the access
30 system ACC1, will fullfill these requirements on the services using Ethernet technology.

To get the access network ACC1 to work, first the users decide which services they select and which VLAN they decide for a certain of the services. Each user can make
35 his own decisions for the correspondance between VLAN and

service, independently of the other users. In the present example the user U11 selects the service from the service provider SP1 and decides the VLAN with the tag TAG1 for this service. The user U11 also selects service from provider SP2 and decides the VLAN with the tag TAG2 for this service. Correspondingly the user U11 selects service provider SP3 on the VLAN with the tag TAG3 and service provider SP4 on the VLAN with the tag TAG4. Other users can select other services and decide other VLAN:s. The user U12, for example, selects the service from service provider SP1 and decides the VLAN with the tag TAG3 for this service. The user U12 also selects service from the service provider SP3 and decides the VLAN with the tag TAG1 for this service. The users then send their decisions to the administrative unit AD1 in the edge access server EAS, the users defining themselves by their respective user port. This sending can be performed by any suitable means, e.g. by assigning a web page, by a common letter or by a telephone call. The administrative unit AD1 also has the information about the correspondance between the service providers SP1-SPn and the service agents SA1-SAn. The administrative unit thus has triplets of information containing service agent, VLAN tag and user port. Gradually, when the users U11-Uml send their information, the administrative unit AD1 will build up the register REG1 in the broadcast handler BH1, as shown in figure 5. For the different user ports UP11-UPkl corresponding lists L11,L12, L13, L21 ... Lkl are created with fields corresponding to the VLAN tags. In this fields are written unique MAC addresses, which are dynamically allocated to the different service agent's respective service port by the administrative unit AD1.

In the example above the user U11 selected the service from service provider SP1 and decided the VLAN with the tag TAG1. The administrative unit dynamically allocates a

unique MAC address SAMAC1 to the service port PT1 of the service agent SA1, connected to the service provider SP1. The address is allocated from a set of locally administrated addresses, LAA. This address is written on
5 the list L11 for the user port UP11 and in a field pointed out by the VLAN tag TAG1. This means that the allocated MAC address SAMAC1 is bound to solely one information pair which has the user port UP11 and the identification tag TAG1 of the VLAN. Now the relation R11 is defined by the
10 address SAMAC1 for the service port PT1, the address being bound to the user port UP11 and the VLAN tag TAG1. It should be noted that no other participant but the service provider SP1 and the user U11 can utilize the relation R11. Following the above examples, a unique MAC address SAMAC2
15 is dynamically allocated to the service port PT2 of the service agent SA2 and is written in a field defined by the VLAN tag TAG2 on the same list L11. A new relation R21 is created, which is defined by the address SAMAC2 and is bound to the user port UP11 and the VLAN with the tag TAG2.
20 Also a MAC address SAMAC5 is allocated to the service agent SA3, service port PT3, in a field with the tag TAG3 and a MAC address SAMAC6 is allocated to the service agent SA4, service port PT4, in a field with the tag TAG4.

For the user U12 with the user port UP12 a unique MAC
25 address SAMAC3 is dynamically allocated to the service port PT1 of the service agent SA1 and this address is written in a field pointed out by the VLAN tag TAG3 on the list L12. For the user U12 also a MAC address SAMAC4 is dynamically allocated to the service agent SA3, service port PT3, and
30 this address is written in a field pointed out by the VLAN tag TAG1 on the list L12.

It appears from the above that, in the embodiment, each of the service ports PT1-PTn can get associated with a set of the unique MAC addresses for the service agents and that

each of these MAC addresses is associated with only one particular of the user ports UP11-UPk1.

The relations between user port and service agent are built up as described above and are stored in the register REG1,
5 but still the user devices can't utilize their respective service. It is in fact not even necessary until now that the user devices are connected. When the users intend to utilize the services they connect their user devices to the wires W11-Wk1 via the VLAN:s as is shown by an example in
10 figure 4 for the user U11. Then there also must be built up a correspondance between IP addresses and MAC addresses. To get such a correspondance the conventional DHCP (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol) is used in the present embodiment. The DHCP is an example on a more general
15 service attachment request. By this protocol the different user devices will get their default gateway, which is the relevant service agent. Then they will also get their respective IP address and the IP address to the relevant service agent. This is performed in the following manner.

20 The user device UD11 sends a frame FR2 with the addresses and payload as is shown in figure 6. In the destination address field D1 the broadcast address F is written. In the source address field S1 the MAC address UMAC1 for the user device UD11 is written and in the VLAN field VL1 the VLAN
25 tag TAG1 is written, the tag appearing from figure 4. The message in the frame FR2 is "this is a DHCP request". The users U11-Uml are connected via the Ethernet VLANs and have no information about the organization of the system ACC1. From the horizon of the users they act as if they were
30 connected to a conventional Ethernet and it is therefore the user device UD11 sends the frame FR2 in figure 6 as a broadcast request. The aim from the view of the user device UD11 is that the broadcast request gives the user the identity of the relevant DHCP server. In the embodiment
35 this sever is the service agent SA1, which has a set of IP

addresses that it can allocate. The broadcast request in the frame FR2 first is intercepted by the handler H1 via the user port UP11. The handler H1, that gets the frame FR2 via the port UP11, adds the identification for this port.

5 It then packs the port identification together with the frame FR2 as a unicast message U1, see figure 2, and sends this message to the broadcast handler BH1 in the edge access server EAS. When getting the message U1, the broadcast handler BH1 looks in its register, the register

10 REG1 of figure 5. With the aid of the user port UP11 and the VLAN tag TAG1 it finds the MAC address SAMAC1 for the service agent SA1. Now the default gateway, the service agent SA1, for the user device U11 is found. The user device UD11 also must be given an IP address itself and an

15 IP address to its default gateway, which is performed in the following manner. The broadcast handler sends the request to the found service agent SA1, which now has the information as appears from a table TAB1 in figure 7. This information is the own port address SAMAC1, the VLAN tag

20 TAG1, a subnet mask SM1, the user MAC address UMAC1 and the service agent's own IP address IPSA1. From its set of IP addresses the service agent SA1 now allocates an IP address IPUD11 to the user device UD11, which is associated with the content in the table TAB1. In a conventional manner,

25 according to the DHCP protocol, information is transferred back to the user U11. The DHCP response includes the IP address IPSA1 of the service agent as default gateway address, the allocated IP address IPUD11 and the subnet mask SM1. The user device UD11 stores the IP address IPSA1

30 to the service agent SA1, its own IP address IPUD11 and the subnet mask, as host configuration data in a conventional manner.

In a corresponding manner the other devices of the user U11 send their DHCP requests with their MAC addresses and

35 corresponding VLAN tag, the tags appearing from figure 4.

Note that the user device UD13 has to send two DHCP requests with the tags TAG2 respective TAG3.

The relation R11 is now established on an IP level. When the service agent SA1 gets an IP packet with the address IPUD11 it finds the information in the table TAB1 and sends the packet to the correct receiver with the MAC address UMAC1. The user device UD11 also has the IP address IPSA1 to the service agent, its "default gateway". The user device UD11 utilizes in conventional manner an ARP request (Address Resolution Protocol) to get a MAC address to the IP address IPSA1. The user device UD11 therefore transmits broadcast the ARP message which is received by the handler H1 in the penult P1 via the user port UP11. The handler adds the identification for the user port and sends the message unicast to the broadcast handler BH1 in the edge access server EAS. The broadcast handler looks in its register REG1 on the list L11 for the user port UP11. On the VLAN tag TAG1 the broadcast handler finds the service agent MAC address SAMAC1. It transmits the address SAMAC1 to the handler H1, which in turn responds with the address SAMAC1 to the user device UD11. With the aid of the address SAMAC1 the user device UD11 now can utilize the relation R11 and get the service from the service provider SP1.

In an alternative embodiment the handler H1 in the penult P1 successively creates the register REG11, shown in figure 8. The register REG11 is similar to the register REG1 in the broadcast handler BH1. The register REG11 only comprises the penult's own user ports UP11, UP12 and UP13 on respective lists PL11, PL12 and PL13 and the VLAN tags. When the user device UD11 has made the ARP request for the first time, as described above, the handler H1 gets back the MAC address SAMAC1 from the broadcast handler BH1. The handler H1 then fills in the address SAMAC1 in the register REG11. The next time the user device UD11 makes the ARP request, the handler H1 first looks in its own register

REG11 instead of sending the request to the broadcast handler BH1. The handler H1 finds the requested address SAMAC1 on the VLAN tag TAG1 and sends the address immediately back to the user device UD11.

- 5 In still an embodiment the register REG11 in the handler H1 is built up when the register REG1 in the broadcast handler BH1 is built up.

Below will be described a number of alternative embodiments.

- 10 In the above embodiment is described that a user first made the DHCP request via the access system ACC1 to get the IP addresses. This request then was followed by the ARP request. In an alternative embodiment the configuration is performed in an alternative way by alternative means. The
- 15 request for the IP addresses can e.g. be performed by so called static configuration. After this configuration the user device makes the ARP request as described above to get the MAC address to its default gateway, the relevant service agent. In the same way as described above all ARP
- 20 requests from the users, also when not preceded by a DHCP request, will be intercepted by the penult and result in the address to the respective default gateway. In this way all communication between different users is forced to flow to the service agent. It was also described that the
- 25 dynamically allocated MAC addresses were locally administrated addresses, LAA. An alternative is that a set of MAC addresses is bought from the IEEE.

- The service agent successively builds up a list for translating between IP addresses and user device MAC
- 30 addresses. When it receives a packet it reads the IP address and if this address is within the service agent's own administrated subnet it looks for the IP address and finds the user MAC address. The service agent forwards the

packet to this user MAC address and packets with any other IP address will be forwarded to the service provider.

In connection with figure 1 and 2 was described that the distributed handler system comprised the handler H1 in the penult and the broadcast handler BH1 in the edge access server EAS. The penult and the edge access server were interconnected by the network ETH1. In an alternative embodiment the penult is a unit close to the edge access server. The transmission of messages between the penult and the edge access server is performed by Ethernet frames without the interconnecting network ETH1. It is even so that the penult can be regarded as a part of the edge access server itself. It should be noted that the edge access server EAS, the penults P1-Pk, the handler registers REG1, REG11-REGk1 and other parts of the access system not necessarily are physical units. Rather they are functional units which can be centralized or distributed depending on what is most appropriate in a situation.

In the embodiment in connection with figure 2 each of the service access relations was defined by solely one unique service agent MAC address, e.g. the relation R11 defined by the address SAMAC1. Each of the service agents therefore could have a set of different MAC addresses allocated to its service agent port, each address for one of the relations to the respective user port. In an alternative embodiment each service agent has only one single service agent MAC address for all its different service access relations to different of the user ports. The respective service access relation is in this embodiment defined by a complete access relation identifier including the service agent MAC address and a further service access relation identifier. This further identifier appears from the Ethernet header in the transmitted frames. An example on such an identifier is the combination of the VLAN tag and the user device MAC address.

With the abovementioned further service access relation identifier it is also possible, in an embodiment, that a plurality of MAC addresses are allocated to the port of one of the service agents. Each of these MAC addresses is then
5 bound to a set of relations, each of the relations having its own further identifier.

In connection with figure 4 it was described that the user U11 had the Ethernet ETH2 with tagged VLAN:s to relate the user devices to the penult P1. As an alternative the user
10 has a port based VLAN with a switch, that reads the tag and switches to a port for the relevant user device. Still an alternative is that the user has a MAC based VLAN and the penult checks that the user MAC address corresponds to the VLAN identifier.

15 In an embodiment the VLAN tag is transmitted from the service agent to the penult to transmit a requested service to the correct user device. In an alternative embodiment no VLAN tag is transmitted to the penult but only the service agent MAC address, e.g. SAMAC1. The penult itself derives
20 the VLAN identity, e.g. the VLAN tag, from the unique service agent MAC address, defining the service access relation.

In connection with figure 2 it was described that the service providers SP1-SPn were connected to each one of the
25 service agents SA1-San. In an alternative a service provider can be connected to two or more service agents.

Above is described the use of DHCP request. For other types of services than IP or other types of establishment of a relation between a user device and a service agent, other
30 types of broadcast service attachment requests can be used. By the broadcast handler also those alternative requests are replied to by a service agent MAC address, which is identified in the same way as for the DHCP. As an example

can be mentioned the use of PPP over Ethernet, PPPoE, where a broadcast PPPoE request will be responded with a service agent MAC address to the service agent acting as PPPoE server. Also, the ARP request is mentioned above. For other
5 protocols than the IP protocol similar procedures are utilized to bring about address resolution.

In connection with a flow chart in figure 9 will be described an overview over the above method of defining the service access relations in the multiservice access system
10 ACC1. In a step 90 one of the users decides one of his VLAN:s for one of the services, e.g. the user U11 selects the service from the service provider SP1 and decides the VLAN with the tag TAG1 for the service. The user sends the the decided tag and the selected service together with his
15 user port UP11 to the administrative unit AD1 in a step 91. In a step 92 the administrative unit checks which one of the service agents SA1-SAn that corresponds to the selected service and finds the service agent SA1. The administrative unit dynamically allocates the unique service agent MAC
20 address SAMAC1 to the service agent SA1 in a step 93. The register REG1 is created in the broadcast handler BH1 in a step 94, in which register the service agent MAC address SAMAC1 is related to the user port UP11 and VLAN tag TAG1. Thereby the service access relation R11 is defined, step
25 95.

The method of building up the correspondance between IP addresses and MAC addresses will be described in short in connection with flow charts in figure 10 and figure 11. In a first step 100 in figure 10 the handler H1 receives the
30 broadcast DHCP request with the frame FR2 from the user device UD11. The frame includes both the user MAC address UMAC1 and the VLAN tag TAG1. The handler H1 adds the user port identification UP11 in a step 101 and in a step 102 the handler sends the complete message unicast to the
35 broadcast handler BH1 in the edge access server EAS. The

broadcast handler notes the user port UP11 and the VLAN tag TAG1 in a step 103 and, looking in its register REG1, it points out the corresponding unique service agent MAC address SAMAC1 in a step 104. In a step 105 the broadcast
5 handler finds the relevant service agent SA1. Now the first part of the procedure is ready, finding the default gateway. Next part is to send IP addresses to the user device. In a step 106 the broadcast handler BH1 sends the user port and the VLAN tag to the service agent SA1. In a
10 step 107 the service agent SA1 allocates the IP address IPUD11 to the user device UD11. In a conventional manner the service agent sends the DHCP response, including the own IP address IPSA1 and the allocated IP address IPUD11, step 108. In a step 109 the user device stores the received
15 IP addresses. The relation R11 is now established on IP level. It should be noted that the procedure described in connection with figure 10, finding the default gateway in the steps 100 to 105 and the user device receiving the IP addresses in the steps 106 to 109, can be performed in
20 alternative ways. One such way is by the static configuration procedure as mentioned above.

The procedure when the service access relation R11 is established in the reverse direction, from the user side to the service agent side, will be described shortly in
25 connection with the flow chart in figure 11. In a first step 110 the handler H1 in the penult P1 receives an ARP message from the user device UD11 on the user port UP11. The handler adds the port identification in a step 111 and in a step 112 the handler H1 sends a message, including the
30 ARP message and the port, unicast to the broadcast handler BH1. The broadcast handler looks in the register REG1 for the user port UP11 and the VLAN tag TAG1 and finds the service agent MAC address SAMAC1, step 113. In a step 114 the broadcast handler sends the address SAMAC1 to the
35 handler H1 and in a step 115 the handler transmits the

address SAMAC1 to the user and the address is received by the user device UD11. Alternatively the broadcast handler sends the MAC address SAMAC1 to the relevant service agent SA1 with an order to transmit the address to the handler
5 H1.

The above described arrangements and procedures are related to unicast access between the service agents and the user ports on the penults. In connection with figure 12 will shortly be described an embodiment with multicast access.
10 Figure 12 shows a somewhat simplified view of figure 2 with the access system ACC1 interconnecting the service providers SP1-SPn and the users U11-Um1. The access system has, as above, the edge access server EAS and the penults P1-Pk interconnected by the Ethernet network ETH1. In this
15 network are shown Ethernet switches SW191, SW192 and SW193 supporting multicast. Also the penults P18, P19 and P20 support multicast access. In the figure is shown a multicast access relation MR11 from the service agent SA19 to the penults P18, P19 and P20. The penult P19 has the
20 user port UP191 with a connection to the user U191 and the user port UP192 connected to the user U192. The penult P20 has the user port P201 connected to the user U193. The user 191 has user devices UD191 and UD192 attributed to the user port UP191 via a VLAN with a VLAN tag TAG19 and the user
25 U192 has a user device UD193 attributed to the user port UP192, also via the VLAN with the tag TAG19. The user U193 has a user device UD194 which is attributed to the user port UP201, also via the VLAN with the tag TAG19.

The aim with the multicast access relation MR11 is, naturally, to distribute a service from the service
30 provider SP19 via the service agent SA19 to the users. Note that this distribution takes place only downstream, from the service provider to the users. The distribution is performed by branching up the service access relation MR11
35 in the edge access server, in the switches and in the

penults. The relation MR11 to the users, which utilize the service from the provider SP19, is defined by one and the same MAC address, in the example a MAC address SAMAC19 allocated to the service agent SA19 by the administrative unit AD1. Each multicast flow from this service agent has a specific multicast address to which all participating users are listening. In the multicast frames transmitted via the relation MR11 the multicast bit M1 in figure 3c is set. Furthermore, the service from the service provider SP19 is distributed on one and the same Ethernet LAN, in the example the VLAN with the tag TAG19, which is bound to the multicast access relation MR11. In the multicast case the users can't decide their own VLAN:s for the service, but a common decision concerning the VLAN identification must be made. The establishing of the relation MR11 is performed in a corresponding way as described above. Also in the multicast access case the service agent for a certain service can have more than one assigned MAC address, in the same way as described above in the unicast case.

In connection with figure 13 will be described an overview over a procedure for establishing the multicast access relations. In a step 130 the VLAN with the tag TAG19 for a selected service from the service provider SP19 is decided. The decision is distributed to the edge access server EAS and to the users in a step 131. In a step 132 the administrative unit AD1 checks which one of the service agents SA1-SAn that corresponds to the selected service and finds the service agent SA19. The administrative unit AD1 dynamically allocates the service agent MAC address SAMAC19 to the service agent SA19 in a step 133, this MAC address defining the multicast access relation MR11. In a step 134 the MAC address SAMAC19 is bound to the decided VLAN with tag TAG19. In a step 135 the multicast access relation MR11 is established in a corresponding way as is described for the unicast relations. In a step 136 the multicast bit M1

is set for frames transmitted over the multicast service access relation MR11.

The services from the service providers SP1-SPn must be delivered with a certain quality level. The resources
5 within the access system ACC1 are however limited, which delimits the quality level. An example on a limited resource is the available bandwidth. Many relations, as the relation R11, are to be transmitted via the connections between the service agent and a switch, between the switch
10 and the penult and between the penult and the user VLAN, which relations have to share the available bandwidth. The quality of service for the relations are decided in agreements and are denoted for each relation in the register REG1 in figure 5. This is exemplified by a quality
15 of service Q having a level QoS1 denoted on the list L11 for the relation R11, which relation is defined by the service agent MAC address SAMAC1. The quality values, e.g. a bandwidth parameter, are utilized when the traffic is shaped by shapers in the access system. As examples on
20 shapers are shown, in figure 2, a shaper SHn in the edge access server EAS and a shaper SHk in the penult Pk. When shaping the traffic flow the shapers in the edge access server look on the service agent MAC addresses, which always appears in a transmitted frame either as source or
25 destination address. With the aid of the address the shaper finds the corresponding value for the quality level. e.g. the value QoS1. In the embodiment when some of the relations were defined by its respective service agent MAC address and the further service access relation identifier,
30 the shaper has to look also on the further identifier. The shaper SHk in the penult Pk can utilize the VLAN tag and the user port in a corresponding manner. The shaping includes in conventional manner buffering the frames, prioritizing with the aid of the priority tag PTG1 and
35 scheduling.

It can happen that a participant tries to make more use of the access system ACC1 than the agreement allows, e.g. sends more traffic than it is agreed. This means that the participant's traffic even after shaping takes more
5 bandwidth than the bandwidth parameter allows. The system can look upon the unique service agent MAC address in the frames and compare with the agreement. In the relation that uses too much bandwidth the system can apply policing and delete some of the transmitted frames. Also for this
10 function the system has to look on the further service access relation identifier in the alternative embodiment for identifying the relations.

It can also happen that the users exchange their MAC addresses by some means and tries to utilize the access
15 system ACC1 for communication between themselves and not with the service providers. To prevent such a behaviour the penults can have a traffic filter, e.g. a filter F21 at the user port UP21 in the penult P2. The filter reads the addresses in the transmitted frames. Frames from the user
20 devices may only have the service agent MAC addresses or the broadcast address as destination address. Frames to the user devices may only have the service agent MAC addresses as source address. Other addresses are not allowed and frames with such addresses are deleted in the filter. Also,
25 broadcast messages from a user, which are not to be handled by any of the service agents, are deleted.

The MAC addresses can have an internal address structure that is adapted to the structure of the access network ETH1. This can simplify the implementation of the network
30 and its components in the access system ACC1.

CLAIMS

1. An access system for communication between service providers and users via service access relations, the system including:
 - 5 - an edge access server having at least one service agent with a connection intended for one of the service providers;
 - at least one penult having at least one user port intended for one of the users; and
 - 10 - an interconnecting arrangement, supporting exchanging of Ethernet frames, interconnecting the edge access server and the penults,

the edge access server being arranged to dynamically allocate unique Ethernet MAC addresses to at least a part of

 - 15 the service agents, the unique Ethernet MAC addresses defining each one service access relation with one of the user ports.
2. An access system for communication between service providers and users via service access relations, the system
20 including:
 - an edge access server having at least one service agent with a connection intended for one of the service providers;
 - at least one penult having at least one user port intended
25 for one of the users; and
 - an interconnecting arrangement, supporting exchanging of Ethernet frames, interconnecting the edge access server and the penults,

the edge access server being arranged to dynamically allocate at least one Ethernet MAC address to each one of at least a part of the service agents, the edge access server also being arranged both to bind said Ethernet MAC addresses to the service access relations to the user ports and to bind relation identifiers to said service access relations, said identifier appearing in a header of a transmitted Ethernet frame.

3. An access system for communication between service providers and users via service access relations, the system including:

- an edge access server having at least one service agent with a connection intended for one of the service providers;
- at least one penult supporting multicast access having at least one user port intended for at least one user Ethernet VLAN; and
- an interconnecting arrangement, supporting exchanging of Ethernet frames, interconnecting the edge access server and the penults, said arrangement including switches supporting multicast,

the edge access server being arranged to dynamically allocate Ethernet MAC addresses to at least one of the service agents, the Ethernet MAC address defining a multicast service access relation with at least one of the user ports, the edge access server being arranged to bind one and the same identification of one of the user Ethernet VLAN:s to the multicast service access relation, said user Ethernet VLAN identification being intended for the users participating in the multicast service.

4. An access system according to claim 1 or 2, said user port being intended for at least one user Ethernet VLAN, the edge access server being arranged to bind also an identification of one of the user Ethernet VLAN:s on said user port to the service access relation.
5. An access system according to claim 3 or 4 including a register in the edge access server for the service access relations, the register including the service agent MAC address, the user port and the identification of the user Ethernet VLAN.
6. An access system according to claim 3, 4 or 5 including:
- a handling system with a handler attributed to the penult and a broadcast handler attributed to the service agents;
 - the handler being arranged to receive a broadcast service attachment request from a user device having a user MAC address, the request including the user Ethernet VLAN identification; and
 - the handler in the penult being arranged both to add to said service attachment request an identification of the user port and to send unicast the request with the user port identification to the broadcast handler.
7. An access system according to claim 6 including:
- the broadcast handler being arranged both to note the user port and the Ethernet VLAN identification and to point out the corresponding one of the service agent MAC addresses;
 - the broadcast handler being arranged to find the relevant service agent via the service agent MAC address; and
 - said service agent being arranged to allocate an IP address for said user device having said user MAC address.

8. An access system according to claim 7 including said service agent being arranged to transmit to said user device via the service access relation, both said allocated user device IP address and its own IP address.

5 9. An access system according to claim 5 or 8 including:

- the handler being arranged to receive from the user device a broadcast address resolution protocol broadcast message including the Ethernet VLAN identification;
- 10 - the handler being arranged to add to said address resolution broadcast message an identification of the user port; and
- the handler being arranged to transmit unicast said address resolution broadcast message with the user port identification to the broadcast handler.

15 10. An arrangement according to claim 9 including:

- the broadcast handler being arranged to note the user port and the Ethernet VLAN identification and to find the relevant service agent MAC address;
- the broadcast handler being arranged to transmit the service agent MAC address to the handler in the penult; and
- 20 - the handler being arranged to transmit the service agent MAC address to the user device.

11. An arrangement according to claim 5, 8 or 10 including, in the handler, a handler register including the user port and the Ethernet VLAN identification pointing out the service agent MAC address.

25

12. An arrangement according to claim 11 including:

- the handler being arranged to receive from the user device, an address resolution protocol broadcast message including the Ethernet VLAN identification;
- 5 - the handler being arranged to find in the handler register the relevant service agent MAC address; and
- the handler being arranged to transmit the service agent MAC address to the user device.

10 13. A method in an access system for communication between service providers and users, the system including:

- an edge access server having at least one service agent with a connection intended for one of the service providers;
- 15 - at least one penult having at least one user port intended for one of the users; and
- an interconnecting arrangement, supporting exchanging of Ethernet frames, interconnecting the edge access server and the penults,

the method including:

- 20 - dynamically allocating in the edge access server unique Ethernet MAC addresses to at least a part of the service agents; and
- binding the unique service agent MAC addresses to solely each one service access relation with one of the user
- 25 ports.

14. A method in an access system for communication between service providers and users, the system including:

- 5 - an edge access server having at least one service agent with a connection intended for one of the service providers;
- at least one penult having at least one user port intended for one of the users; and
- 10 - an interconnecting arrangement, supporting exchanging of Ethernet frames, interconnecting the edge access server and the penults,

the method including:

- dynamically allocating in the edge access server at least one Ethernet MAC address to each one of at least a part of the service agents;
- 15 - binding said Ethernet MAC addresses to the service access relations to the user ports; and
- binding relation identifiers to said service access relations, said identifier appearing in a header of a transmitted Ethernet frame.

20 15. A method in an access system for communication between service providers and users via service access relations, the system including:

- 25 - an edge access server having at least one service agent with a connection intended for one of the service providers;
- at least one penult supporting multicast access having at least one user port intended for at least one user Ethernet VLAN; and

- an interconnecting arrangement, supporting exchanging of Ethernet frames, interconnecting the edge access server and the penults, said arrangement including switches supporting multicast,

5 the method including:

- dynamically allocating in the edge access server Ethernet MAC addresses to at least one of the service agents, the Ethernet MAC address defining a multicast service access relation with at least one of the user ports; and
- 10 - binding one and the same identification of one of the user Ethernet VLAN:s to the multicast service access relation,

said user Ethernet VLAN identification being intended for the users participating in the multicast service.

16. A method in an access system according to claim 13 or
15 14, said user port being intended for at least one user Ethernet VLAN, the method including binding an identification of one of the user Ethernet VLAN:s on said user port to the service access relation.

17. A method in an access system according to claim 15 or
20 16, the method including creating a register in the edge access server for the service access relations, the register including the service agent MAC address, the user port and the identification of the user Ethernet VLAN.

18. A method in an access system according to claim 15, 16
25 or 17, the access system including a handling system with a handler attributed to the penult and a broadcast handler attributed to the service agents, the method including:

- receiving in the handler a broadcast service attachment request from a user device having a user MAC address, the
30 request including the user Ethernet VLAN identification;

- adding to said service attachment request an identification of the user port, the adding performed in the handler in the penult; and
- sending unicast the request with the user port
5 identification to the broadcast handler.

19. A method in an access system according to claim 18, the method including:

- 10 - noting in the broadcast handler the user port and the Ethernet VLAN identification;
- pointing out the one of the service agent MAC addresses that corresponds to the user port and the Ethernet VLAN identification;
- finding the relevant service agent via the service agent
15 MAC address; and
- allocating in said relevant service agent an IP address to said user device having said user MAC address.

20. A method according to claim 19 the method including transmitting, via the service access relation, both said
20 allocated user device IP address and an IP address for the allocating service agent to said user device.

21. A method according to claim 17 or 20, the method including:

- 25 - receiving in the handler, from the user device, a broadcast address resolution protocol broadcast message including the Ethernet VLAN identification;
- adding to the message an identification of the user port; and

- transmitting unicast from the handler said address resolution broadcast message with the user port identification to the broadcast handler.

22. A method according to claim 21, the method including:

- 5 - noting in the broadcast handler the user port and the Ethernet VLAN identification;
- finding the relevant service agent MAC address;
- transmitting the service agent MAC address to the handler in the penult; and
- 10 - transmitting from the handler the service agent MAC address to the user device.

23. A method according to claim 17, 20 or 22, the method including creating in the handler a handler register including the user port and the Ethernet VLAN identification
15 pointing out the service agent MAC address.

24. A method according to claim 23, the method including:

- receiving in the handler, from the user device, an address resolution protocol broadcast message including the Ethernet VLAN identification;
- 20 - finding in the handler register the relevant service agent MAC address; and
- transmitting from the handler the service agent MAC address to the user device.

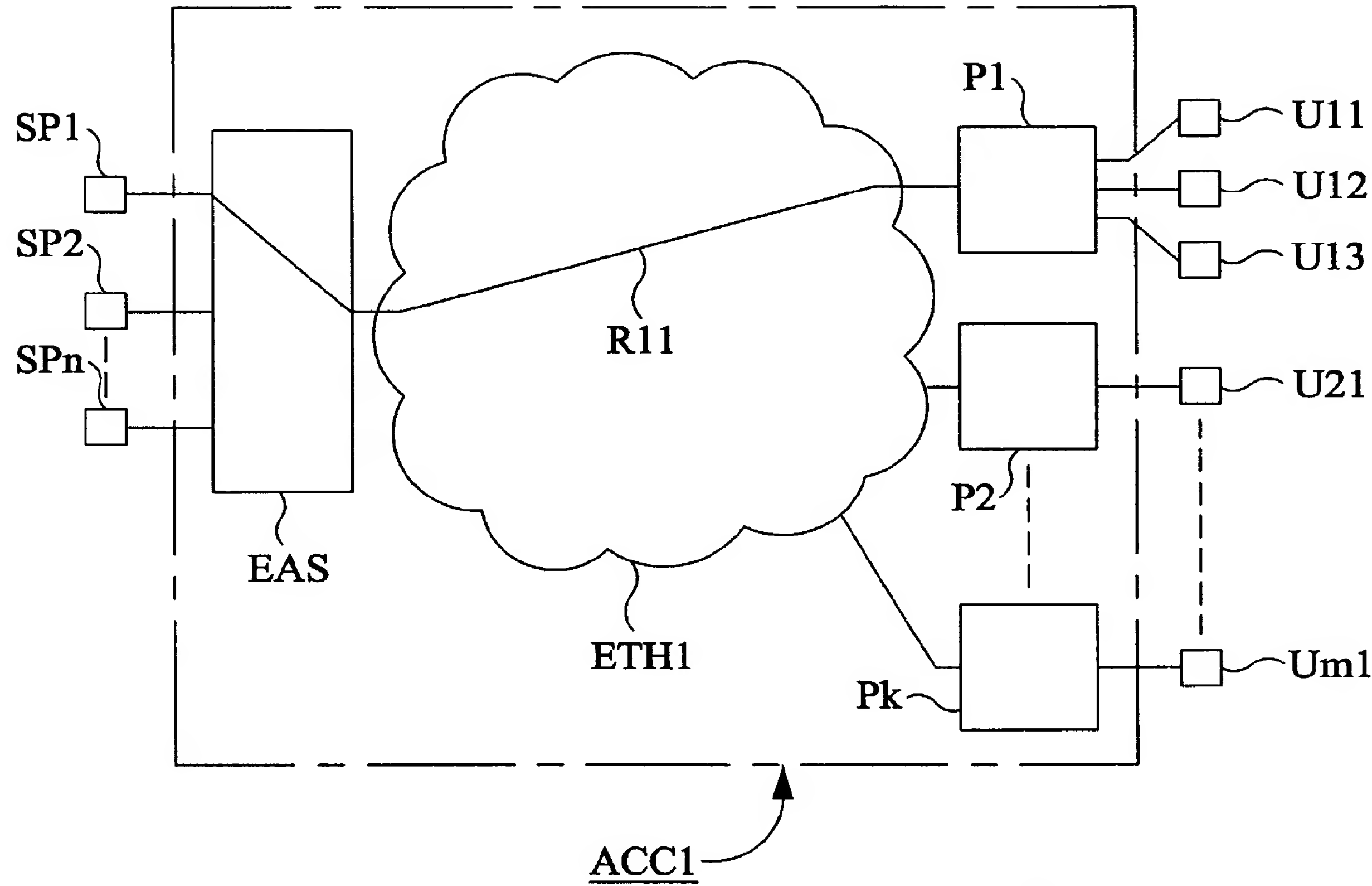


Fig. 1

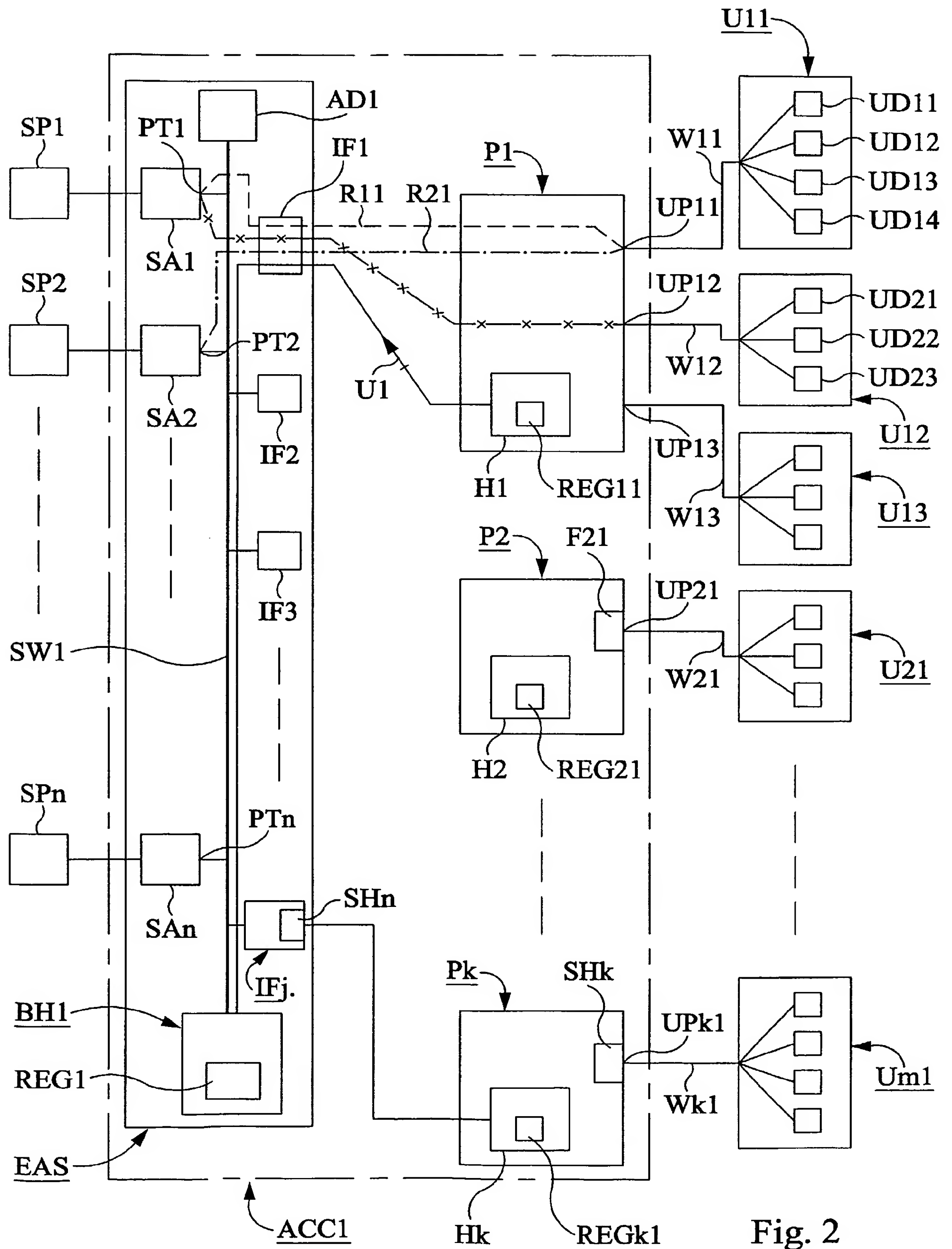


Fig. 2

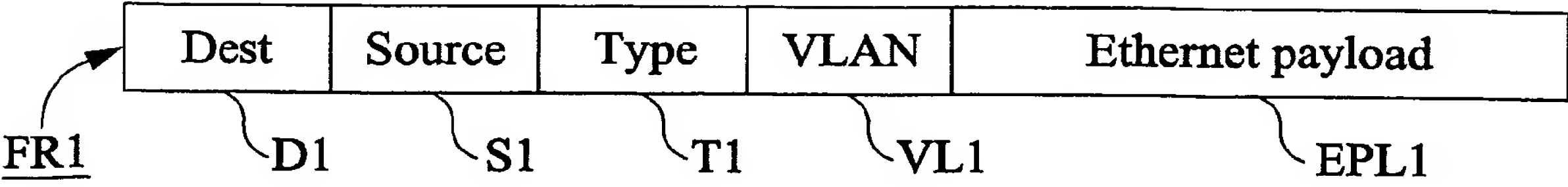


Fig. 3a

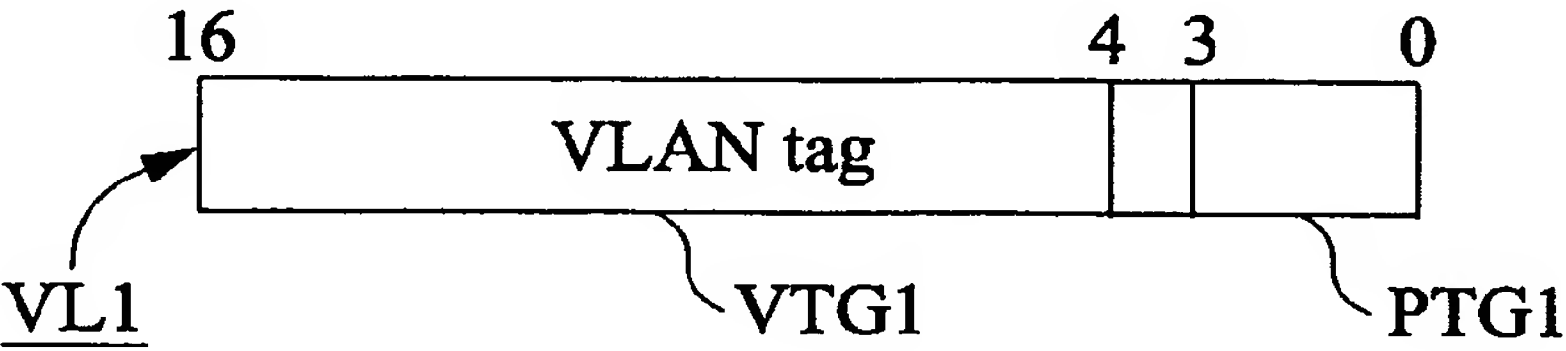


Fig. 3b

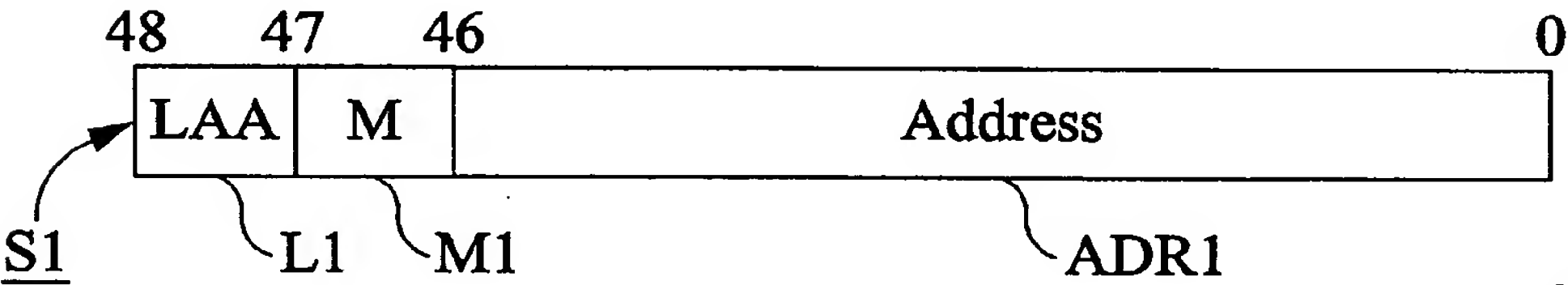


Fig. 3c

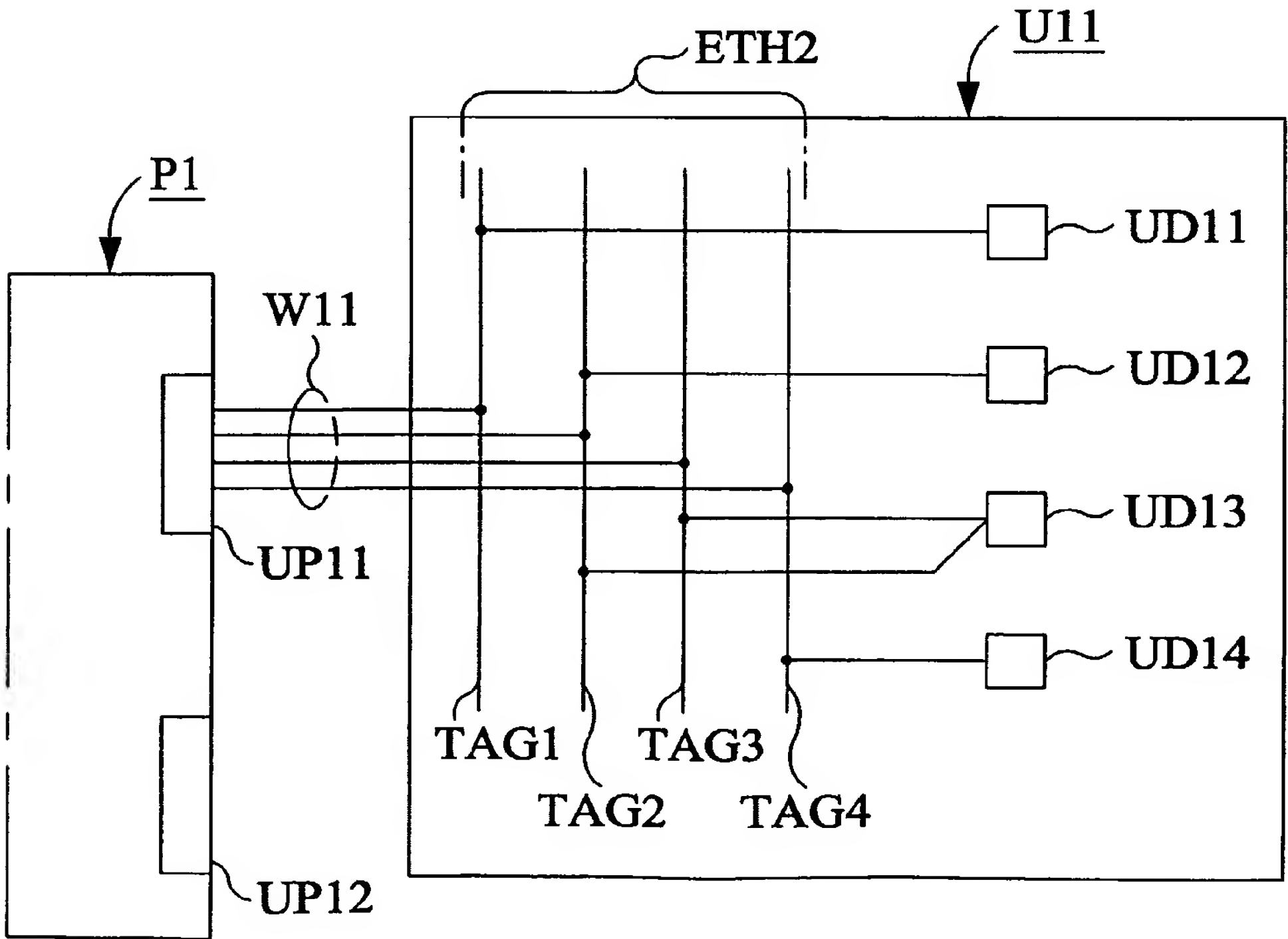


Fig. 4

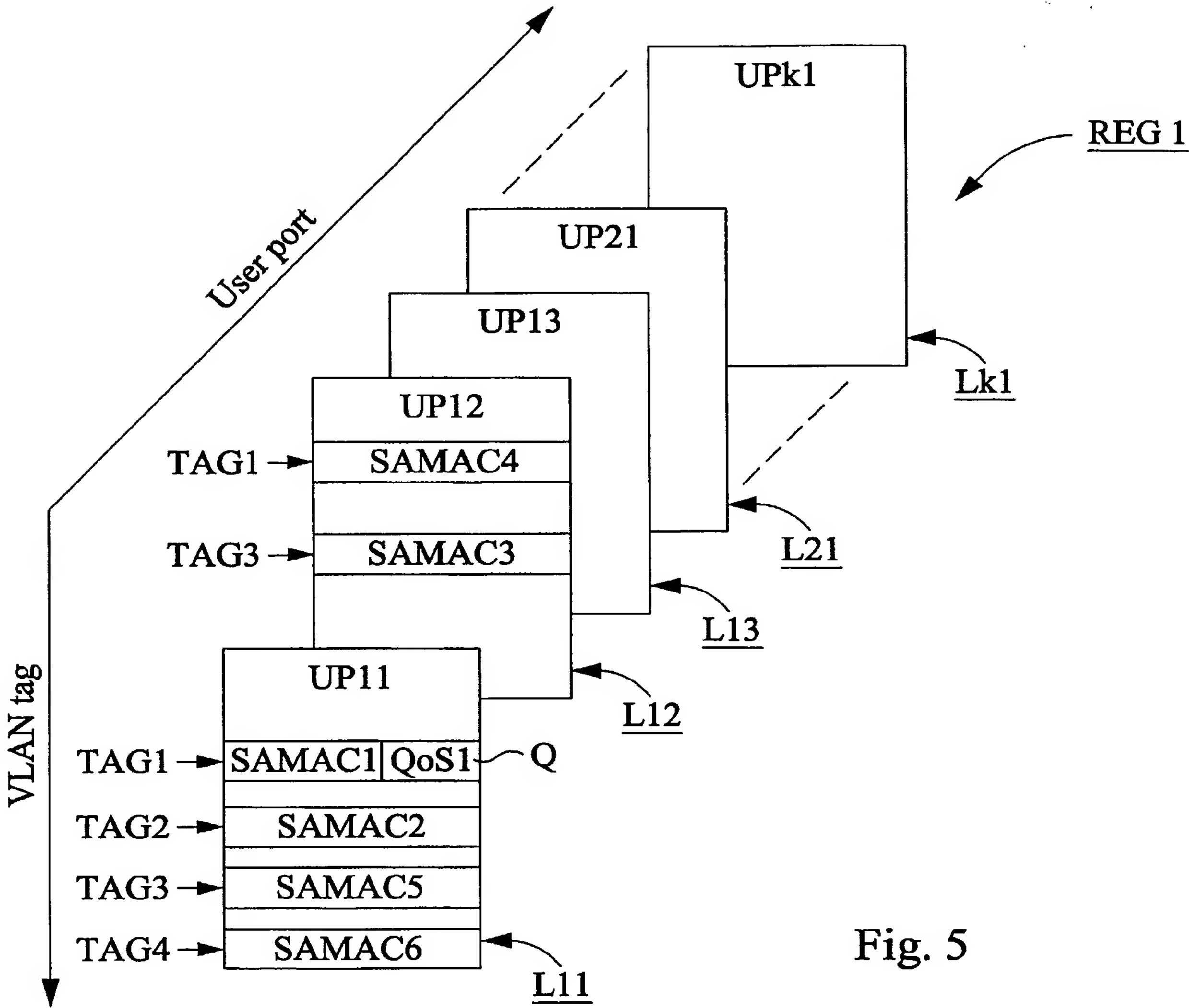


Fig. 5

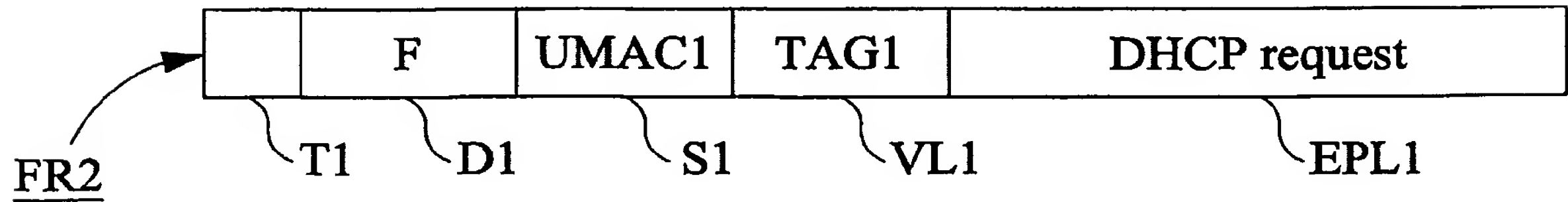


Fig. 6

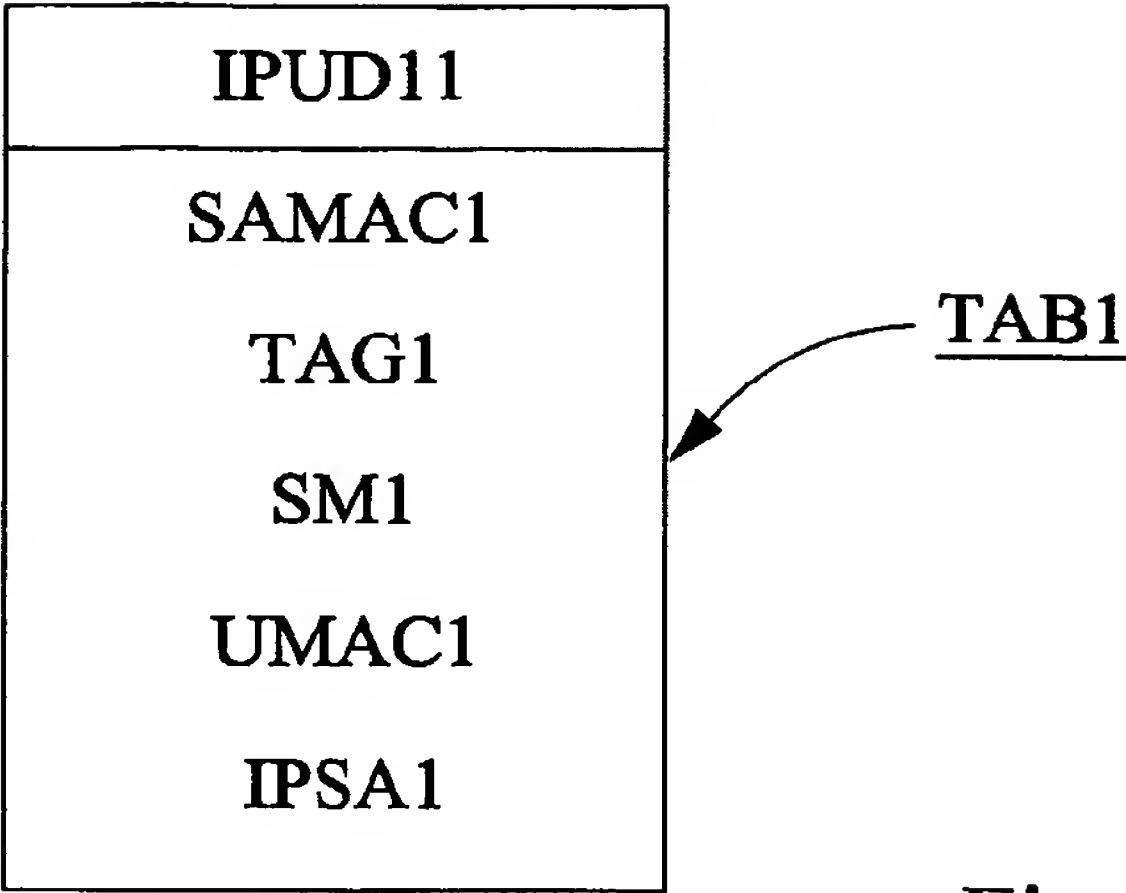


Fig. 7

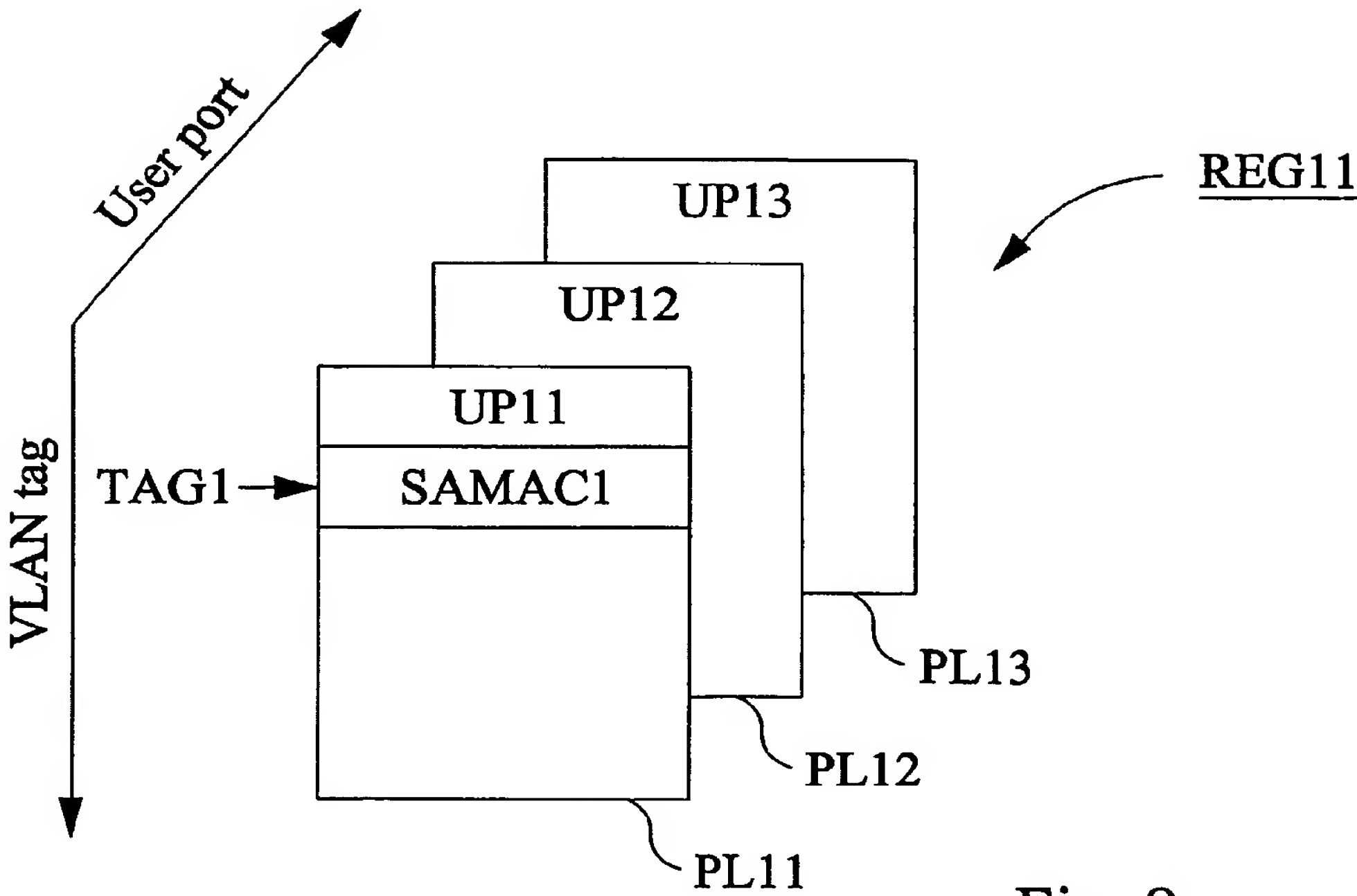


Fig. 8

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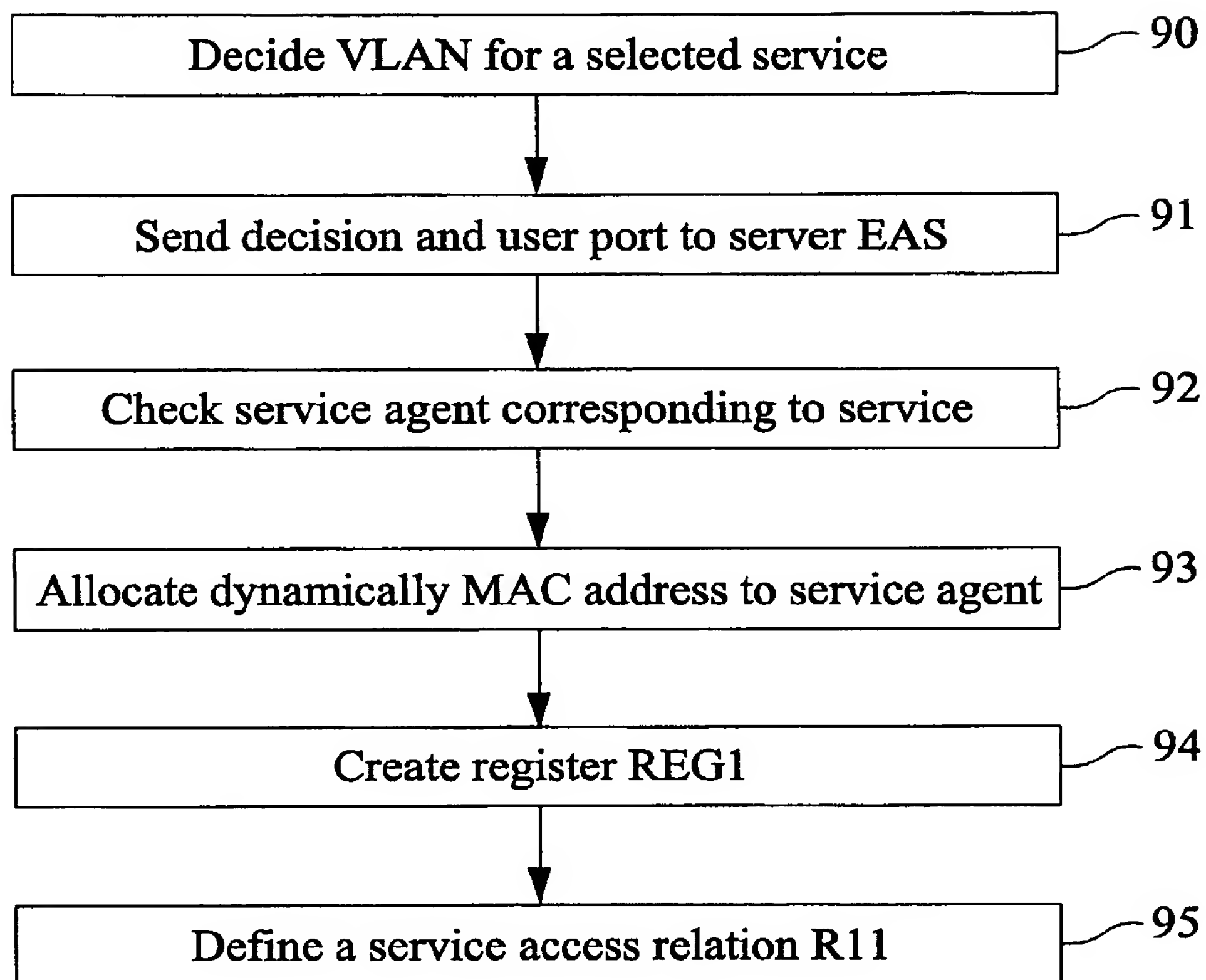


Fig. 9

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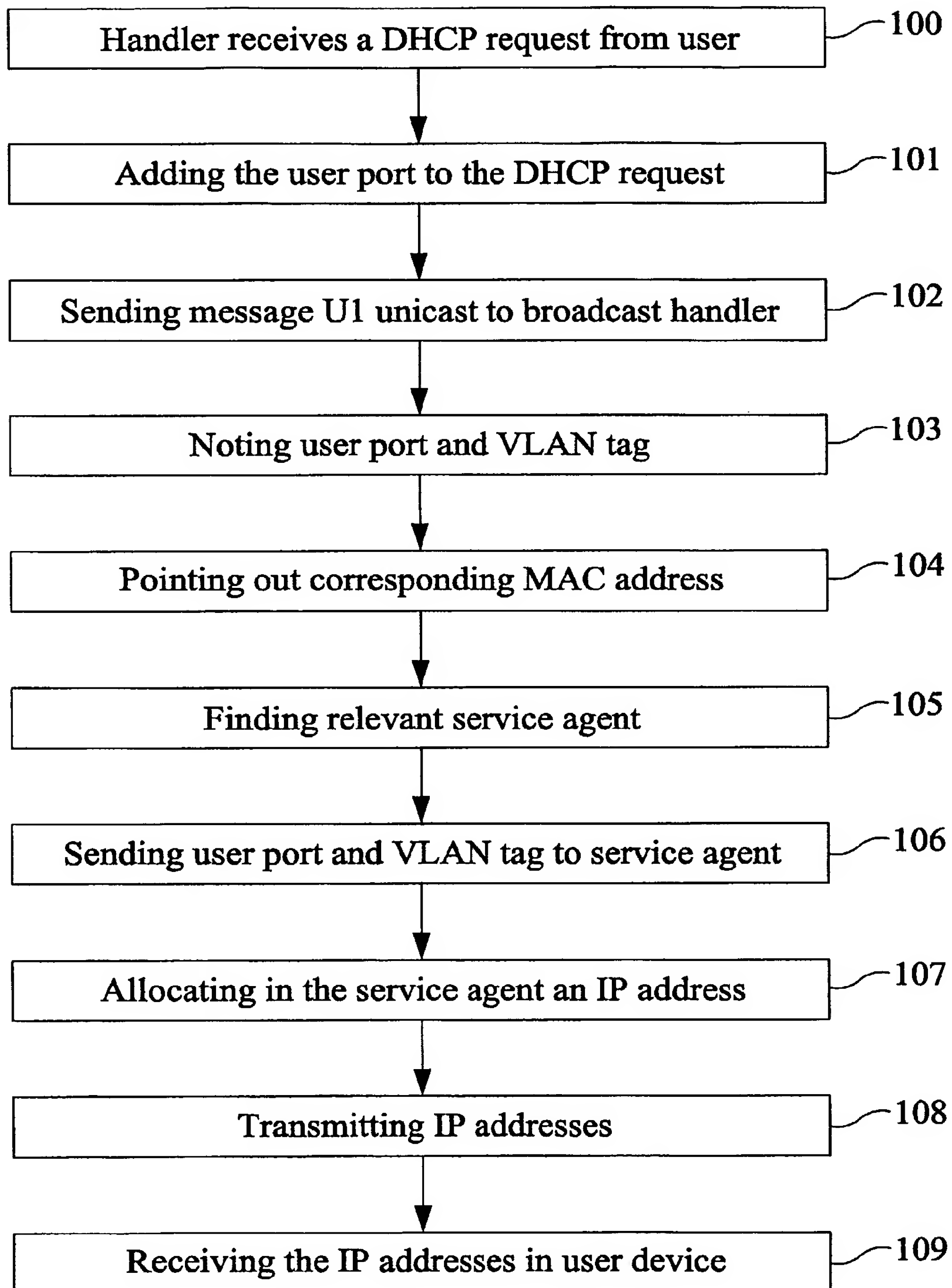


Fig. 10

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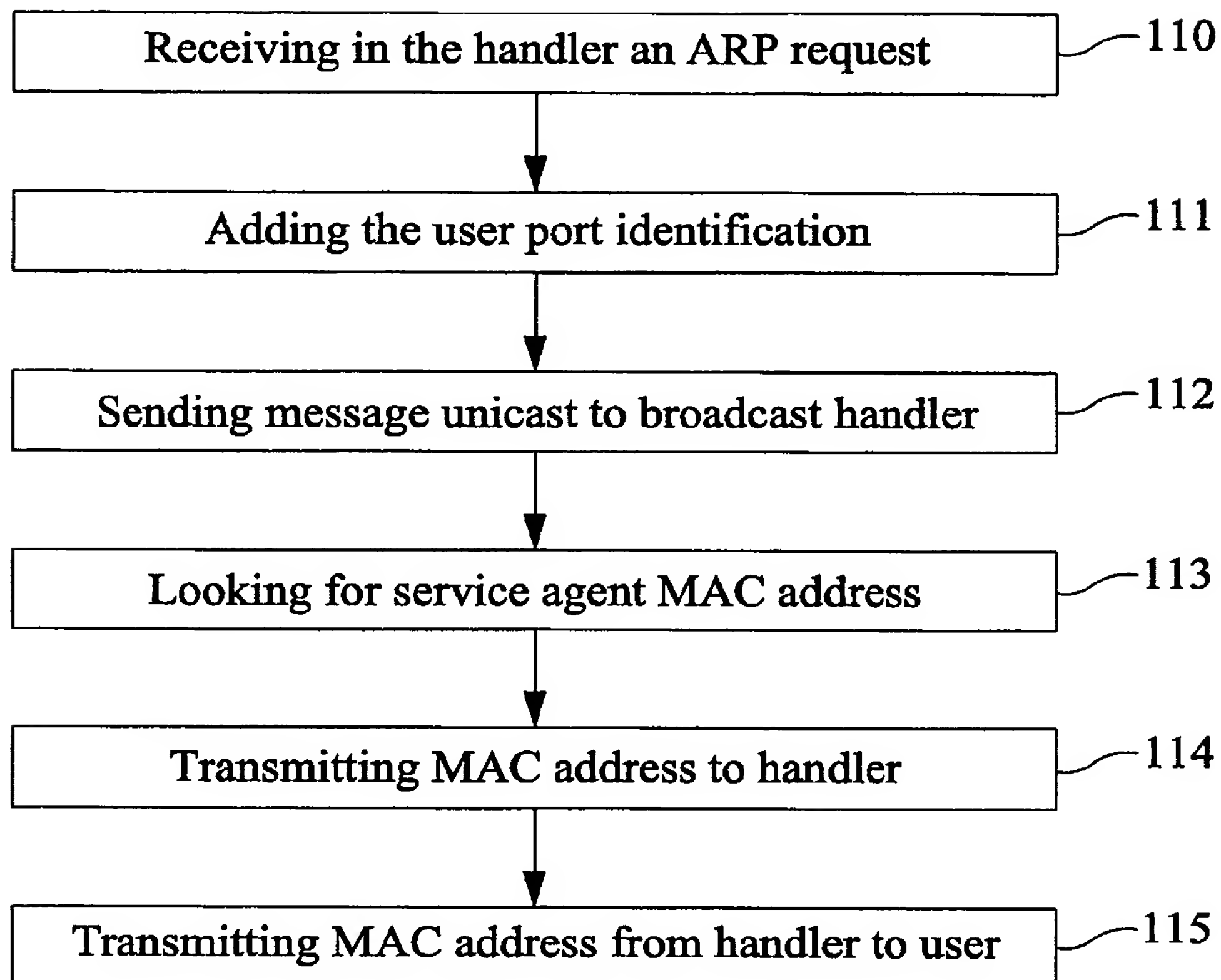


Fig. 11

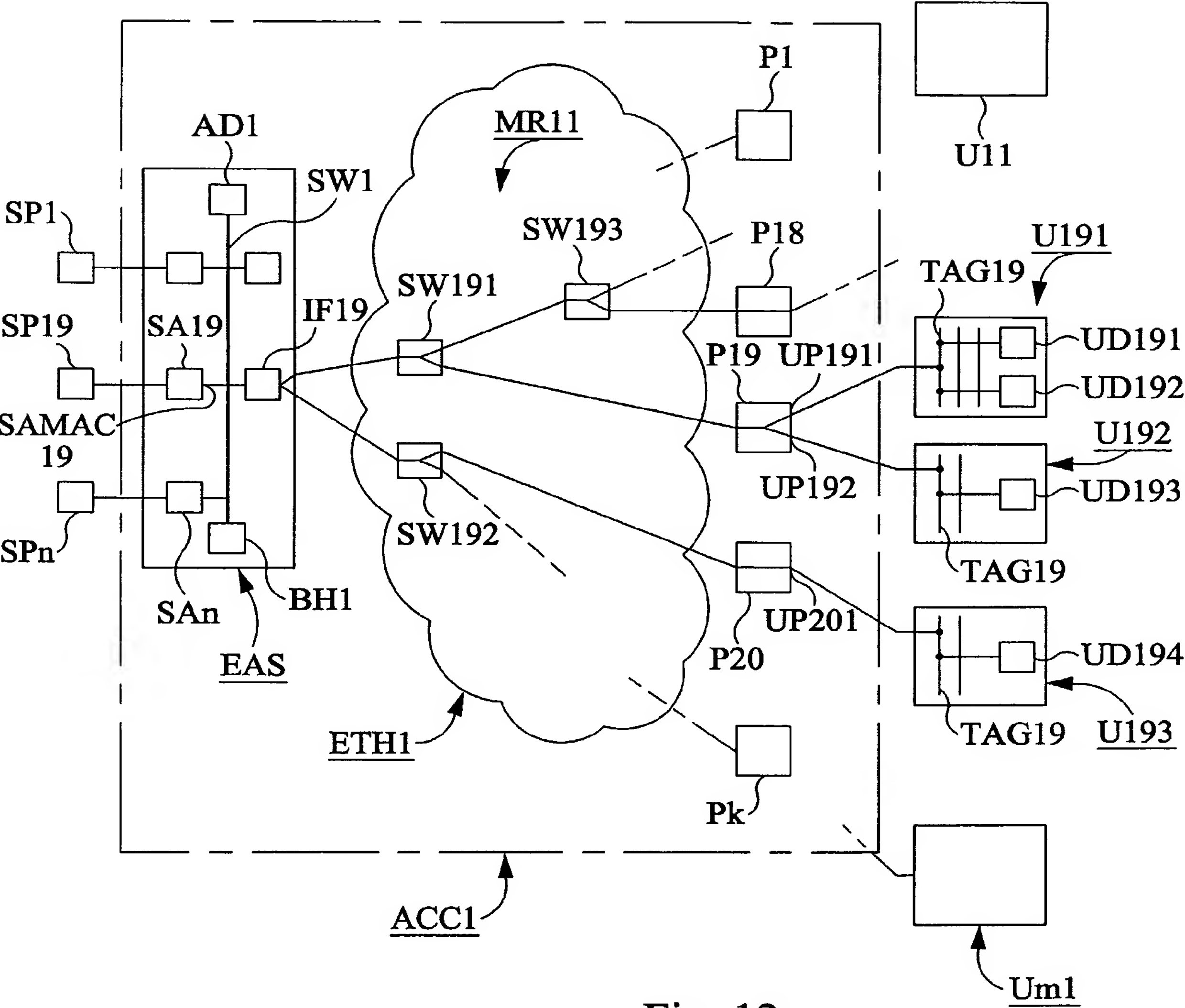
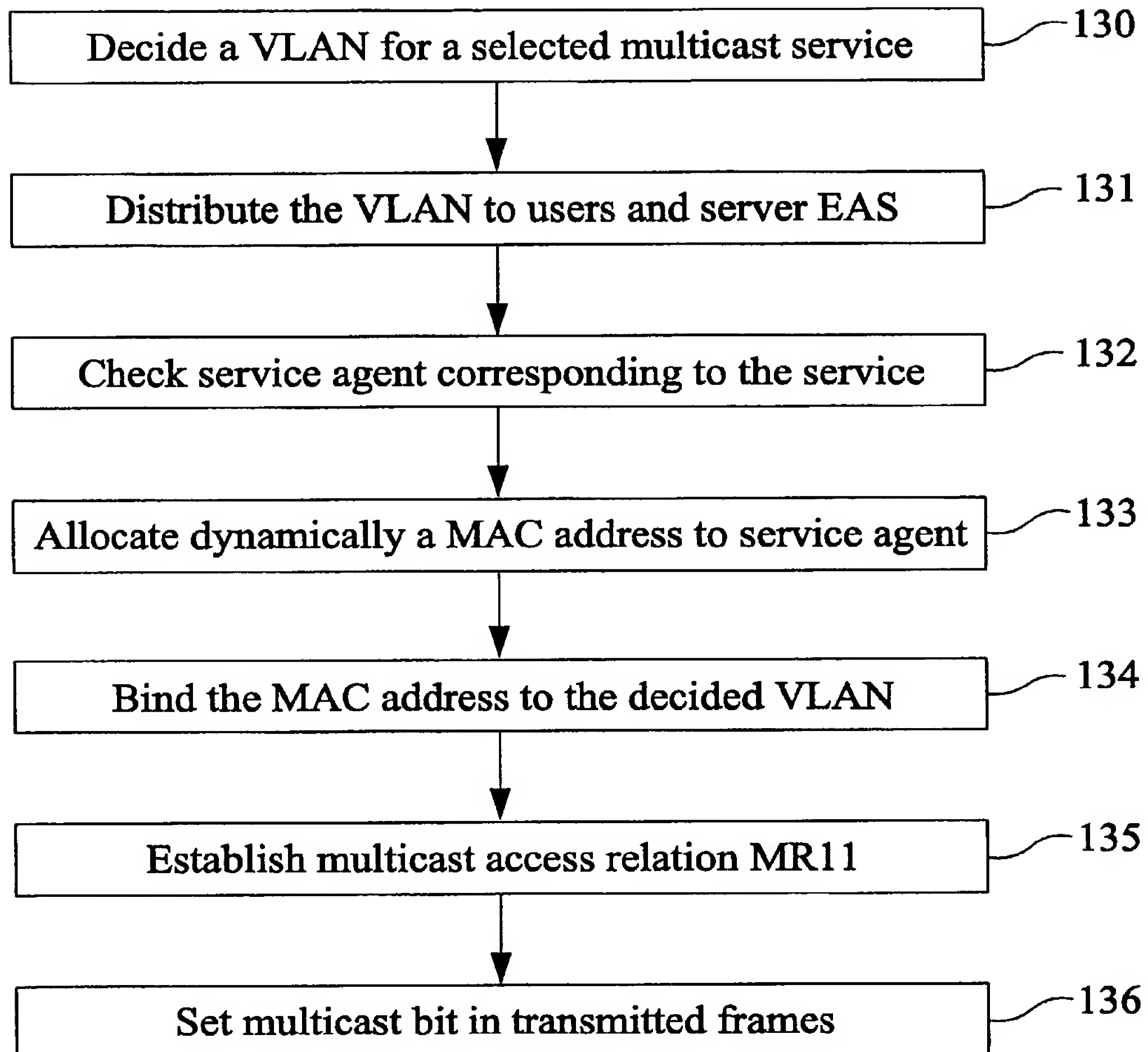


Fig. 12

10/10**Fig. 13**

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/SE 02/00226

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC7: H04L 12/28, H04L 12/46

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC7: G06F, H04L, H04Q

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

SE,DK,FI,NO classes as above

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPO-INTERNAL, WPI DATA, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 0171983 A1 (AT & T CORP), 27 Sept 2001 (27.09.01), page 2, line 1 - page 3, line 82; page 5, line 149 - page 6, line 158; page 7, line 208 - page 8, line 224, page 12, line 365 - page 13, line 390, figures 1,2, claims 1,5 and abstract --	1-24
A	WO 9824224 A1 (TELEFONAKTIEBOLAGET LM ERICSSON), 4 June 1998 (04.06.98), page 9, line 10 - page 10, line 17; page 23, line 13 - page 24, line 27, figures 1,4, claim 1, abstract --	1-24

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

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"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

19 July 2002

Date of mailing of the international search report

09 -08- 2002

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/SE 02/00226

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	<p>US 5835725 A (CHIANG,S.T. ET AL.), 10 November 1998 (10.11.98), column 4, line 63 - column 5, line 2; column 5, line 11 - line 15, claims 9,10, abstract</p> <p>-- -----</p>	1-24

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

06/07/02

International application No.

PCT/SE 02/00226

Patent document cited in search report			Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
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				WO	0172003 A	27/09/01
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				AU	3113797 A	05/01/98
				AU	3198697 A	05/01/98
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